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## **Gila National Forest to Conduct Prescribed Fires**

(Silver City, NM – February 16, 2006) Although weather conditions are setting up for an early and active fire season, fire managers on the Gila National Forest are closely monitoring both dead and live fuel moistures in all fuel types in preparation for prescribed fire activities. The most favorable conditions for the projects will be attainable one to two months earlier than usual. "As we plan out the strategy for this fire season, one of the key factors to consider is the opportunity for prescribed fire. Several projects are ready for the implementation phase, or ignition – following months of planning, the ignition phase is the culmination of the effort, but it doesn't end there...monitoring and data collection will soon follow to help track fire effects and restoration of treated areas," said Charlie Elliott, Fire Management Officer for the Silver City and Wilderness Ranger Districts.

Prescriptions that outline the parameters, including weather, fuel conditions, assigned resources and contingency plans, are uniquely designed for each project and identified in the individual "burn plans." On the day of ignition, if conditions are not within the predefined "parameters," then the ignitions will be postponed. Even during the project, fire managers are able to cease ignitions, if conditions begin to change or indications arise that don't seem favorable for safe and effective outcomes.

Plans are in place to conduct ignitions on three prescribed fire projects, next week. The Squirrel Springs (1,500 acres) and Collins Park (3,500 acres) projects are on the Reserve Ranger District. Squirrel Springs is located east of Apache Creek, NM, while the Collins Park project is about 30 miles southeast of Reserve, NM. The Wilderness Ranger District will be working on the McKnight project, located about three miles northeast of the Wilderness Ranger Station in the Mimbres Valley. The project area encompasses almost 800 acres and is expected to treat mostly piñon juniper and some ponderosa pine vegetation. Primary objectives of the projects are to reduce hazardous fuels, which in turn, will improve watershed conditions and wildlife habitat.

Silverdale and Wildhorse prescribed fire projects in the Burro Mountains on the Silver City Ranger District, Gatlin on the Reserve Ranger District, and Hermosa on the Black Range Ranger District are also on the horizon for implementation. Conditions will be closely monitored to determine the best time for ignitions on these projects, which will likely be in March or April.

For general information regarding fire activity on the Gila National Forest, please contact the fire information officer at 505-388-8245 or visit the website: [www.fs.fed.us/r3/gila](http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/gila).

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